

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 152009

FOLLOWING REPEAT OF ADDIS ABABA 2644 SENT ACTION SECSTATE JUN 14.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 2644

DEPT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PBOR, PDIP, PEPR, ET, SO, US
SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON MENGISTU THREAT TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH U.S.

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2631

SUMMARY: PMAC CHAIRMAN MENGISTU'S THREAT TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH U.S. BECAUSE OF WEAPONS SUPPLY TO SOMALIA IS PROBABLY MORE SERIOUS THAN IMPLIED THREATS IN PAST, BUT BREAK IS NOT YET IMMINENT. IN HIS REMARKS, THERE WAS CERTAIN DEGREE OF DISAPPOINTMENT THAT U.S. WAS "DETERMINED TO ABET SOMALIA'S AGGRESSIVE AND EXPANSIONIST POLICY" DESPITE ETHIOPIA'S EFFORTS TO LIVE IN PEACE WITH ITS NEIGHBORS BASED ON EQUALITY. MENGISTU APPARENTLY DESIRES TO ALERT U.S. GOVT TO POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR U.S.-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS IF WEAPONS ARE ACTUALLY SUPPLIED TO SOMALIA. END SUMMARY.

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1. PMAC CHAIRMAN MENGISTU'S THREAT TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IF SOMALIA INVADES ETHIOPIA AGAIN, THIS TIME USING U.S.-SUPPLIED WEAPONS, WAS NEITHER SURPRISING NOR UNPREDICTABLE. FONMIN FELEKE RETURNED FROM NEW YORK JUNE 10, WHERE HE WAS BRIEFED BY SECRETARY AND DAS HARROP ABOUT THE POSSIBLE U.S. SUPPLY OF MILITARY MATERIAL TO SOMALIA, AMONG OTHER TOPICS. SINCE HIS RETURN, HE HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BRIEFED MENGISTU ON HIS

MEETINGS AND MAY THUS HAVE PROVIDED MENGISTU'S POINTED REMARKS ABOUT U.S. POLICY CONCERNING SOMALIA, IN A PRESS CONFERENCE DEVOTED CHIEFLY TO THE ERITREAN SITUATION. EMBASSY ADDIS HAS REPORTED CONTINUOUSLY OVER PAST TEN MONTHS THAT SUPPLY OF WEAPONS TO SOMALIA, NO MATTER WHAT JUSTIFICATION WAS GIVEN BY USG, WOULD BE SEEN BY ETHIOPIANS AS ACID TEST OF US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. MENGISTU HAS ONLY REAFFIRMED THIS PUBLICLY.

2. FROM ETHIOPIAN PERSPECTIVE, PMGSE DOES NOT VIEW ITSELF AS THREAT TO SOMALIA BECAUSE IT HAS FAITHFULLY RESPECTED SOMALIA'S FRONTIERS DESPITE SOMALI PROVOCATIONS AND ITS OWN CAPABILITY TO TAKE PUNITIVE ACTION AGAINST SOMALIA. THE PMGSE ALSO JUSTIFIABLY ARGUES THAT SOMALIA AGGRESSION CONTINUES IN OGADEN WITH OFFICIAL SOMALI GOVT (GSDR) SUPPORT AND THAT, SIAD'S ASSURANCES NOTWITHSTANDING, SOMALIA HAS NOT RENOUNCED ITS TERRITORIAL CLAIM ON ETHIOPIA. THE PMGSE CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT SUPPLY OF WEAPONS TO SOMALIA NOT ONLY ABETS SOMALI DISREGARD FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW CONCERNING FRONTIERS, BUT ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO DISRESPECT FOR OAU PRINCIPLES.

3. WHAT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT AT THIS POINT IS THE SERIOUSNESS OF MENGISTU'S BRINKSMANSHIP. IT APPEARS MOST LIKELY TO US THAT HE HAS NOT MADE ANY FINAL DECISIONS FOR MOMENT AND THAT HE INTENDED TO GIVE THE USG DIRECT AND PERSONAL ADVANCE WARNING ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE USG SUPPLYING ARMS TO

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SOMALIA FOR US-ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. WHILE MENGISTU HAS MADE IMPLIED THREATS IN PAST ABOUT BREAKING RELATIONS, IT APPEARS THAT THIS TIME HE IS MORE SERIOUS. ONE OF MAJOR REASONS FOR GREATER WEIGHT BEING GIVEN TO JUNE 13 MENGISTU THREAT IS THAT RENEWED MAJOR FIGHTING IN OGADEN DURING PERIOD WHEN ETHIOPIA IS SHIFTING ITS RESOURCES TO NORTH, WOULD AGAIN CONSTITUTE A SERIOUS MILITARY THREAT TO ETHIOPIA. ETHIOPIA IS ALSO BECOMING MORE EXASPERATED WITH THE CONTINUING THREAT POSED BY SOMALIA AND THE COSTS ASSOCIATED IN MEETING THAT THREAT.

4. EMBASSY DOES NOT PREDICT THAT ANY SUPPLY OF U.S. WEAPONS TO SOMALIA WILL AUTOMATICALLY LEAD TO BREAK IN U.S. RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA. BUT THIS IS CERTAINLY ONE OF CONSEQUENCES MENGISTU WISHES USG TO CONSIDER BEFORE ENTERING MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMALIA. MENGISTU'S REMARKS ARE NOT REPEAT NOT INTENDED FOR PROPAGANDA/IDEOLOGICAL PURPOSES BUT RATHER REPRESENT HIS OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL RESPONSE TO BRIEFING GIVEN TO FONMIN FELEKE AND ALSO TO KENYANS BY USG OFFICIALS ABOUT ARMS SUPPLY TO SOMALIA.

MATHERON UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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